

Book review: Romano, M. (Ed.). (2024). *Metaphor in socio-political contexts*. De Gruyter Mouton

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Metaphor proliferates in socio-political discourse as in a natural milieu, not just as a tool to make the abstract more tangible, but even more as a human cognitive capacity to create social and institutional reality. More and more evidence in the social sciences corroborates that the social world, i.e., economy, politics, religion, and other social spheres, does not exist intelligibly outside the meaning that human discourse ascribes (Åhäll & Borg, 2013, p. 198). Thus, discourse configures our conventional collective representation of social reality and is constitutive of it (Durkheim, 2008/1912). That reality is fundamentally metaphorical. *Metaphor in Socio-Political Contexts* expounds metaphor in socio-political discourse from a socio-cognitive approach, providing the reader with “(i) an understanding of metaphor as a powerful ideological tool; (ii) an interest in unravelling the role of metaphor within the new (multimodal) discourses and genres of the latest ways of digital communication; and (iii) a vindication of empirical and corpus-based evidence, necessary to establish more realistic links between cognition, linguistic variables and social meaning” (p. 5).

This book is organised into an introductory chapter followed by three parts: (I) Construing reality through metaphor, (II) Contesting the world through metaphor, and (III) Performing ideology through multimodal metaphor, comprising 13 contributions. The chapters in the three sections present empirical research relating metaphor to the construal of ideology, persuasion and contestation.

Drawing on a well-established background on the power of metaphor in cognitive processing and argumentation, Manuela Romano’s introductory chapter opens a fresh and fascinating perspective on the study and analysis of metaphor as an interactional, situated phenomenon, offering key insights into its role in communication and the transformation of society. The author provides an overview of the vast body of research on metaphorical applications in social and political discourse over the last two decades. Particular attention is devoted to the converging pathways of Cognitive Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis by merging social and language-use aspects with cognitive ones into what the author labels Critical Socio-Cognitive Discourse Analysis. The author emphasises the evolution of the social concept of metaphor from its conception as an

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embodied, individual, atemporal, and cognitive mechanism to a synergetic, communal, historical, and social activity understood as a dynamic and interactive process. The chapter discusses ideology as a construal of reality geared by metaphorical framing strategies and socially situated variables. Romano remarks that metaphor construes ideological frames in a wide variety of genres and modes, as the contributions in this book demonstrate. She claims the need to establish realistic links between linguistic variables and socio-political meanings using authentic data through mixed-method empirical approaches and agrees on explicit procedures for the identification and classification of verbal and multimodal metaphor. Though the book's goals seem ambitious, the contributions satisfy these challenging theoretical and methodological premises.

Part I (Chapters 1-5), titled "Construing reality through metaphor", analyses how specific construals of social reality arise. In Chapter 1, Maria-Josep Cuenca and Manuela Romano explore Spanish digital media and confirm the conceptual, cognitive, and discursive non-equivalence of similes and metaphors, the former being more specific in source and mapping. The authors attribute these differences to the sources and their conventional or creative nature. In Chapter 2, Laura Filardo-Llamas and Alba Roldán-García explore frame activation for gender construal in Tumblr users' discourse. Focusing on cultural knowledge, the authors identify a set of the most frequent frames construing queer identity. They signal the frame's pedagogic function in the endeavour to transform our present-day worldviews on gender. In Chapter 3, Veronika Koller analyses the ideologies and discourse goals behind British news scenarios portraying refugees. Her conclusions show that left-wing publications refer to refugees more frequently and with greater variety, whereas right-wing channels tend to use more emotional terms. The author suggests that the British press represents refugees as weak and relatable, creating a welcoming atmosphere in the community. Silvia Peterssen and Augusto Soares da Silva (Chapter 4) scrutinise the metaphorical construal of the COVID-19 pandemic in social network narratives by two well-known far-right populist leaders, Spanish Abascal and Brazilian Bolsonaro. The chapter illustrates how polarising metaphors enhance inter-group antagonism by promoting exclusionary, intolerant, and extremist political ideas and practices; at the same time, they build nationalist, conservative political and social identities through self-legitimation and delegitimation of the *Other*. Contrasts between Spanish and Brazilian socio-political contexts are reflected in the source domains identified and the frequency of use of particular metaphors. Chapter 5 addresses the discursive functions of metaphor and the mapping strategies that fulfil such functions. Tatjana Đurović and Nadežda Silaški reveal creative, innovative and idiosyncratic mappings that render metaphor a powerful instrument for social action.

Part II, comprising Chapters 6-8, and titled "Contesting the world through metaphor", delves into how responses via metaphorical models and construal may counteract diverse emerging social phenomena. In Chapter 6, Andreas Musolff reveals cues to the interaction between conspiracy theories and cognitive models, such as war. He suggests that this kind of blending is probably a key factor moving certain groups to violent, anti-social attitudes and claims for counteraction in the discourse arena, so that such war scenarios

are deconstructed. In Chapter 7, M. Dolores Porto explores the effects of metaphor on the social construal of health, the environment, and education through digital social media. She describes the process of reframing these target domains by resisting conventional metaphors and substituting them with innovative ones, thereby prompting the emergence of new attitudes and values that supersede the socially pre-established ones. Dennis Tay, Ying Yin, and Yating Yu, in Chapter 8, analyse the persistence of metaphor variants in blame discourse, measuring the emergent critical time point for novel metaphors and their patterns of decadence.

Chapters 9-12 in Part III, titled “Performing ideology through multimodal metaphor,” illustrate diverse phenomena of ideology performance as metaphors transcend media and modes. Roberto Asenjo and María Muelas-Gil (Chapter 9) demonstrate the similarities and divergences in the metaphorical portrayal of women in Irish Catholic and Protestant murals. Chapter 10 offers a helpful guide to identifying and interpreting visual metaphors. Charles Forceville remarks on the relevance of cultural, intertextual, and temporal context, and on the interplay of metaphorical and non-metaphorical strategies in cartoons. Elżbieta Górska (Chapter 11) explores the influence of the socio-political context of recent Polish history on the metaphoric interpretations of visual public art. Finally, Christopher Hart (Chapter 12) reveals the ideological and persuasive potential framing effects of particular metaphors in the discourse of protest. The author shows the power of this usage in legitimising or delegitimising both the authorities and the protesters’ actions.

This volume shows admirable coherence in applying corpus-based discourse methods and a critical usage-based socio-cognitive approach to language and metaphor. The central role of metonymy in social cognition is also recognised in several of the studies, as metonymic uses tend to highlight many perceptual aspects of identities (see, e.g., Filardo-Llamas and Roldán-García). One of the book’s notable contributions lies in its focus on the dynamic and synergistic role of metaphor in social discourse, as emphasised in those chapters delving into the creative-productive side of ideological frame construction (see the chapters in section II, and also those by Peterssen and Soares da Silva, and Asenjo and Muelas-Gil). Beyond that, the book tests the relationship between metaphorical conventionality and creativity, and their framing effects on recipients. The impact of these effects, i.e., how they are either accepted, resisted or contested, is a growing area of interest for discourse analysts and psycholinguists today in a world full of controversy and ideological convulsions. In addition, the volume constitutes a representative pack of research illustrating how metaphors construe ideological frames in a wide variety of media genres and modes, from the most conventional, such as news, interviews, political debates, and political cartoons, including freer social media discourses such as Microblogs, Tumblr and Twitter, up to discourses that touch the artistic sphere, such as street art and sculpture, also thereby making justice to the crucial position of multimodal metaphor in present-day social discourse.

The book responds to the need for a broad scope in the study of framing in social media communication, helping us understand the multi-layered semantic nature of institutional realities and the dynamics of group interaction within the community.

In this regard, the book illustrates the social function of metaphors as conceptual representations of social and institutional facts and worlds and, even more, their linguistic realisations as constitutive elements of these realities. The chapters collected in this volume constitute a remarkable contribution to a growing body of research in the social sciences that discloses the manifold discursive strategies for influencing people's acknowledgement of and cooperation with ideologies and institutional structures, even if it is not to their advantage to do so. In addition, some of the chapters illustrate the counteraction of discourses in favour of resistance and contestation. Thus, this volume is a vivid testimony to the present-day tour de force in the social media arena, amid the multifarious ideologies and social forces in dispute for ideological hegemony. In addition, this collection emphasises the role of human cognition in all these processes, endorsing a triangulation between discourse, society, and cognition (Romano & Porto, 2016).

Overall, the book accomplishes the editor's initial goals by providing an invaluable source of information on the different facets of conceptual representations of ideology, contestation, and protest through linguistic and other media. It constitutes a welcome addition to the extant literature on social reality, social discourse and their cognitive representations. Beyond that, it opens widening perspectives on their consequences for human beings' everyday lives in our contemporary civilisation. I recommend this reading to readers, scholars and researchers interested in disentangling the role of figurative language and discourse in the construction of ideology and social reality.

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